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fore, but it is a great circumstance, and will bear repetition,—we partook once of a Twelfth Night, which has been ever since called, by way of eminence, *the Twelfth Night*, and which closed with that same victorious meal at daylight, when an assemblage of some of the finest eyes in the world, looked, by the acknowledgment of all present, as if they were still untired. The night, like Shakspeare's Twelfth Night, began with music; an accomplished musician set it going; it rolled on with music, amidst wits, poets, and beauties; and when the company broke up after breakfast, and the door was opened to let them forth, they were not only saluted by the morning rays, but there suddenly, and like enchantment, struck up the trumpets of a troop of horse, as if on purpose to greet them, and do honor to the lovely victors.

We do not say to the reader, Go and do likewise. That must depend upon a hundred circumstances of time, place, and occasion. The party in question did not do it themselves on purpose. They never even did it again. Circumstances carried most us in different directions: and had the case been otherwise, the particular impulse might not have occurred. We only mentioned it, because the subject, like the occasion, transported us. Besides, health is to be considered; and we heartily join in the advocacy of good hours. All that we have desired to do in these remarks on a social custom, is to furnish those who might desire it with such a knowledge of the custom as we possessed; to recommend to them as much or as little use of the knowledge as would best meet the ideas of enjoyment in their own circles; and to partake with them, in imagination, a harmless pleasure.

ANECDOTICAL NOTICES OF SOME OF THE OLD COMPOSERS.

HANDEL.

UNDER the above title we propose to place before our readers some of the principal incidents in the biography of our ancient standard composers, selected from indisputable authority: rather seeking to offer an entertaining sketch of their musical career, than to present a detailed history of their lives, or discussion of their distinguishing merits.

We give precedence to Handel. His regality of portly presence, alike with his supremacy of genius, seems to demand this as a kind of right. Looking at that picture of him, where he is represented in all the dignity of richly embroidered coat, full bottomed perriwig, and flowing ruffles, with his amplitude of person, and jovial rotundity of countenance, sitting in a large chair, by a round table heaped with music-books, and his whole air redolent of potential wealth in intellect and vigorous proportion,—some one said of it:—"That looks just the man to write double-choruses!"

GEORGE FREDERICK HANDEL (there is something large and lordly in the very names,—a sort of trumpet

mouthful!) was the son of a physician; and was born on the 24th Feb., 1684, at Halle, in Upper Germany. He was destined by his parents for the law; but at an early age he exhibited so decided a taste for music, that every musical instrument was carefully excluded from his father's house, in the vain hope of checking this inclination, and holding him to the fulfilment of the family design. The innate propensity, however, was there, and not to be controlled. Its first dawn manifested itself, upon the occasion of a visit which the child paid, in company with his father, to the household of the Duke of Saxe Weissenfels; in whose chapel, when only seven years of age, the boy Handel created a sensation, by having strayed to the organ, and touching the keys in such a manner as attracted the notice of the Duke, who chanced to be there. Upon enquiring who the performer was, the Duke remonstrated with Handel's father on the propriety of allowing the boy to pursue so decided a bent; and although inflexible at first, the parent at length conceded the point. Handel's studies were prosecuted under Zachau, a sound musician, and organist of the cathedral church of Halle; but whose power of instruction, the pupil, at thirteen years of age, had altogether outstripped.

On Handel's first residence in Hamburg, it is said, that he played a ripieno violin in the orchestra of the opera; but that on the absence of the harpsichord-player, he acted as his substitute with so masterly an effect, that he commanded general admiration, and at once established his reputation as a performer on that instrument. The dethroned harpsichord-player, however, was not inclined to abdicate his post, or to submit to its resignation without testifying his resentment. Some accounts say that he challenged Handel, who only escaped his antagonist's sword by its coming in contact with the button of his coat. Other versions relate, that the incensed harpsichordist waylaid his rival returning from the opera, with intent to stab him; and that Handel was preserved from the assassin's blow by an opera-score which he was carrying home in the breast-pocket of his coat. This seems so fitting a source of safety for the great musician, that we cannot help inclining, in preference, to its belief. Four of Handel's operas—*Almeria*, *Nerone*, *Florinda*, and *Daphne*—were produced at Hamburg, previous to his departure from that city. He went thence to Florence, where he composed his opera of *Roderigo* for the Grand Duke John Gaston de Medicis, whose mistress, it is said, carried her admiration for the young musician to so indiscreet an extent, that had he responded to it as indiscreetly, it might have resulted in the ruin of both. Handel, however, whose paramount passion was music, prudently withdrew from these too flattering favors, and repaired to Venice; where friendship made him ample amends for gallantry, as he here formed an acquaintance with Domenico Scarlatti, Gasparini, and Lotti. Subsequently, at Rome, he enjoyed the society of Corelli and the best masters; and from thence went to Naples. After a period spent in his own country, at Hanover, Handel thought of visiting London; but before he left Germany, he went to see his mother, and his old preceptor Zachau, at Halle. His father had been dead some time; and he found his surviving parent, suffering not only from advanced age, but from blindness,—a touching premonition, alas, of an affliction destined to fall also upon her gifted son. Handel's sojourn in England was so long,

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and his talent found here so noble a foster-mother, that he may well be considered her adopted son. In another sense, Handel may be claimed as thoroughly English; inasmuch as it was not until after his diligent study of Purcell, Croft, and other English Cathedral writers, that he produced those immortal oratorios, on which his fame chiefly rests. From the period of his arrival, his career was marked by a series of triumphs. He began by a triumph—a signal triumph; for he triumphed over a stout prejudice, which the new King of England had conceived against him, on account of his having failed to return to Hanover, when he himself was elector there,—a kind of surly compliment in itself, by-the-bye. It seems that Baron Kilmansegge, a good friend of the composer's, and a courtier high in royal favor, contrived the expedient; which was this. He arranged a party on the Thames, at which the King was present; and having requested Handel to prepare music for the occasion, his "Water music" was performed on board an attendant barge. His majesty, struck with its beauty, enquired the name of the composer; and upon hearing it, not only graciously pardoned the old offence, but doubled the pension of which Handel had been in receipt.

Before founding the establishment projected by the nobility, called "The Royal Academy of Music," Bononcini and Attilio were invited over, as worthy rivals to test the strength of Handel, in his claim to sway the musical sceptre. The ordeal appointed, was the composition of an opera in three acts, *Muzio Scævola*, each act to be set by one of the competitors. To Handel, who composed the third act, was at once adjudged the victory; and he continued to fulfil his engagement with the subscribers until 1726. Handel's society was sought as an honor by people of the highest rank, the Duke of Chandos, and the Earl of Burlington, making him their guest for long periods together. At Burlington-house, during his three years' residence there, his time passed delightfully; his mornings being devoted to study, his evenings in converse with some of the first wits and men of letters of the day. Pope, Gay, Arbuthnot, and others, often met there, at dinner; and frequently, his afternoons were spent at St. Paul's Cathedral, where Greene, (though then neither Dr. Greene, nor organist) was proud to receive him, and do the honors of the organ, of which Handel was so fond.

Anecdotes are related of Handel's dominant love of his art, which towered above all ordinary considerations of ceremony or interest. One, when at a rehearsal, a lady-singer proving somewhat refractory, Handel startled her into submission by catching her up in his arms, and swearing, that if she persisted, he'd throw her out of the window. Another, when just previous to a performance, somebody chancing to look through the hole in the green-curtain of the stage, announced that "there was a wretched attendance, the house was quite empty;" Handel retorted "So much de bedder! De moosic will sound all de finer!"

Of his gastronomic powers, with his unmisgiving confidence in them, and his complacent sense of his competence altogether, there is an amusing incident related. Arriving at a certain hostelry, he ordered dinner for six; and after waiting until the appointed hour, no repast appearing, he rang for the waiter, and accosted him with "Vell! Why do you not

serve de dinner?" The reply meekly suggested that they were "only waiting for the company—the other five gentlemen who were expected." Upon which Handel thundered out:—"Bring up de dinner! I am de Gompany."

As Handel advanced in life, he devoted his attention almost exclusively to the composition of sacred music; and he produced, with marvellous fertility, his grand oratorios. Of the sublimest, the *Messiah*, we can so inadequately speak, in a sketch like the present, that we refer our readers to an account given at greater length upon the subject elsewhere in our pages.

The circumstance of Handel's setting some of Milton's words from the *Samson Agonistes*, after his calamity, has a doubly affecting impression, when we think of the glorious blind poet, and the glorious blind musician, each in their several high-privileged art, giving utterance to their soul's light within them. We can never listen to that sublime strain of combined harmony and poetry,—"*Total Eclipse*,"—with its profound yearnings of emotion, but we are stirred by feelings of reverential pity, breathless admiration, and deep, heart-stricken sympathy, towards the two great sightless Seers, hymning their own perceptions of a kindred woe, in the supposed plaint of Samson, midst his quenched vision: yet, withal, so divine a spirit pervading it, as to redeem the bitterness, and leave nothing but an influence of tender beauty. Glorious power of Art, which can shed radiance upon even so dark a human sorrow as blindness.

Handel's death occurred in 1759, at the age of seventy-four.

Our next sketch will contain several curious anecdotes in the life of Haydn.

M. GÉVAËRT.

M. Gévaert, a young Belgian artist, hardly yet four-and-twenty, has lately made his debut in Paris with signal success as a composer. The circumstances of his life contain some interesting particulars. He was born, of humble parents, in a little village a few leagues from Ghent; and for a time, like them, was only a simple labourer; but as he early evinced a dislike to the occupation, they endeavoured to find some other pursuit for him. Struck with the music he had heard each Sunday at Church, he burned to discover by what signs these sounds were expressed; and sitting down upon the ground, traced out for himself, in the sand, figures which should form a system of musical language—intelligible at least to him. He chanced to obtain from the Sacristan a vocal score; and although the notes were at first mere hieroglyphics to him—differing as greatly from his own, as Hindostanee from French—yet soon, such was his ardour, that he mastered the notation of the score. Without assistance, he taught himself to sol-fa; and an old book of thorough-bass, that he found at the schoolmaster's, initiated him into the principles of harmony. His first composition was an air with variations, which he played on the organ one Easter Sunday, to the wondering admiration of the villagers. He composed, still without any help from a master, a Mass for 3 voices, several Motetts, a Trio for pianoforte, violin, and violoncello, and other works, which soon spread his fame among the neighbouring villages. Nothing was talked of but the musical labourer; and his parents were urged to send him to some Conservatoire. But they entertained a horror of the very name of musician, which they associated with that of strolling fiddler. At length, won by the dazzling predictions of an old village